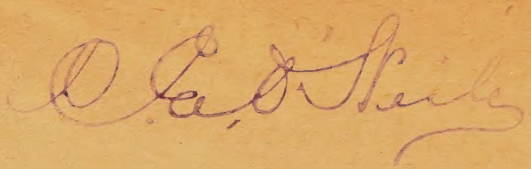
THE CURSE OF ADAM

P. M. NORTHCOTE, Ph. D.



THE CURSE OF ADAM

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The Curse of Adam

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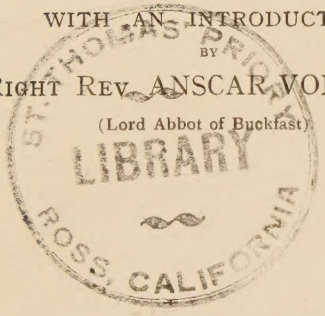
BY

The Rev. P. M. NORTHCOTE, Ph.D.

AUTHOR OF
"GOD MADE MAN," "THOUGHTS OF THE HEART,"
"THE IDEA OF DEVELOPMENT," &c.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION
BY
THE RIGHT REV. ANSCAR VONIER, O.S.B.
(Lord Abbot of Buckfast)



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PREFACE

MANY are interested in worldly pursuits, in earthly politics, or in natural science. Few are interested in the most absorbing of all topics, God's revelation to man. To those few I present this short treatise on the most obscure and the most painful mystery which that revelation has made known to us.

P. M. NORTHCOTE.

St. Agatha's, Dawlish, 1914.

INTRODUCTION

Father Northcote has undertaken an unpopular task in this book. The curse of Adam is no longer the counterpart of the grace of Christ, in modernised Christianity. Yet, if there be any theological antithesis that is indispensable to the earnestness and vigour of Christian spirituality, it is the opposition between our fall in Adam, and our raising up in Christ. We all know what place this antithesis holds in the theology of St. Paul. The great apostle has been accused of translating his own spiritual experience into a universal law for mankind. But even Oxford Divines, surrounded by everything that is beautiful and refined in human life, will find out sooner or later that amongst the many laws of Nature, there is also the law : " that when I have a will to do good, evil is present with me."—Rom. vii., 27. *As for the human*

masses, to maintain that they are not a fallen race is the cruellest kind of bluff in matters spiritual, resembling in every respect the callous mendacity of the worsted general, who refuses to admit his defeat, though he be driven from every one of his positions, and his dead and wounded cover the battlefield.

Father Northcote's book comes at the right time. Great efforts are being made to solve the problems of the Fall in a merely natural, a merely physiological way. Let anyone read the reports of certain up-to-date scientific writers, chiefly on the subject of eugenics, and the fact will become clear that nothing will save our society from falling back into the intellectual immodesties of pagan times, except the old Christian doctrines of our fall in Adam and our raising up in Christ.

ANSCAR VONIER, O.S.B.,
Abbot.

Buckfast Abbey, 1914.

THE CURSE OF ADAM

CHAPTER I

The Existence of Original Sin

"By one man sin entered into this world."—Rom. v., 12.

The literature of the day as we find it in newspapers, magazines, and the books which have a wide circulation, is perhaps the truest index one can obtain of the thought-currents of the time. For the most part it is of poor quality, shallow in thought and meretricious in style. The kind of stuff a serious and cultured man would not be disposed to waste much time over, were it not that here, if anywhere, one comes in touch with the spirit of the age. For it is the medium between the higher intellects and the multitude: receiving from the former, actuating the latter.

Every age may be called to some extent an age of transition, for the world never stands still ; but this is peculiarly the case in our own times ; rapid development began with the invention of the art of printing, which accelerated the movement of the world's thought to a wonderful extent ; but since the beginning of the last century invention and improvement have made such prodigious strides, advancing more in a single century than I suppose in all previous centuries taken together ; means of communication between mankind all the world over have been so developed, that we now move at a speed that is positively bewildering.

Such being the case, it is indeed difficult to keep pace with the manifold thought-combinations which are going on around us. Some of these just crystallize, and then almost immediately dissolve again ; others have a longer life ; a few give some promise of permanence ; to one alone is granted divine assurance that it will abide

for ever, the synthesis called Catholicism. It is from this firm ground that we watch anxiously the kaleidoscopic changes which pass before our eyes. Men are dazzled with the glare, unable to take stock of things, intoxicated by the sense of their own knowledge and power. Nor will the world attain a more settled pose until we have grown accustomed to our new surroundings.

There is much that is hopeful in these modern movements, much also to give us cause for apprehension. And as yet we are quite uncertain in what direction human tendencies will set in the coming era.

We notice in particular a certain mental drift which is distinctly disquieting. A new and world-wide religion (or rather philosophy) is taking shape amongst us which is fundamentally anti-christian, and all the more dangerous on account of the many high and noble ideals it inculcates. Christ is upheld as the greatest

reformer and the highest example, but His Godhead is not admitted, while original sin and redemption are implicitly or explicitly denied. Christianity is supernatural, this philosophy is purely natural. Christianity looks to the hereafter, this philosophy concerns itself with the world we know by experience. Christianity seeks to raise society through the individual, this philosophy relies more upon the efforts of society to raise the individual. In fine, we perceive that humanity is more conscious than ever of its shortcomings, but it seeks emancipation from the ills that afflict it by its own endeavours unaided by God. That mankind realizes its degradation is a good sign, that it is turning away from Him who alone can heal it is indeed a bad sign. It is most sad to see that even amongst the Anglican clergy many men are departing from their old traditional beliefs, for though they might be excused for not attaining to what they had not, it is difficult to suppose

that they will not be judged for abandoning what they had. It is, therefore, necessary for us more than ever to insist upon the doctrine of original sin.

Concerning original sin and its transmission Pascal most profoundly remarks (Pensées ii., v., 4.) :

"It is, however, a remarkable thing that the mystery farthest removed from our comprehension, that namely of the transmission of original sin, is precisely that without which we cannot have any knowledge of ourselves. For undoubtedly there is nothing which more shocks our reason than to say that the sin of the first man has made guilty those who being so distant from this source, seem incapable of participating in it. This transference appears to us not only impossible, but even most unjust ! for what could be more contrary to the rules of our poor justice than to condemn eternally a child incapable of willing anything for a sin in which it would seem to have had so little part,

which was committed six thousand years before even it existed ?* Certainly nothing jars upon us more rudely than this doctrine : and yet, without this mystery, the most incomprehensible of all, we are incomprehensible to ourselves. The knot of our condition has its entanglements in this abyss. In such wise that man is more inconceivable without this mystery, than this mystery is inconceivable to man."

Let us examine severally the two parts of this deep thought. The first is that the transmission of original sin is quite inconceivable, and, moreover, according to our notions, it would be stark injustice.

With regard to the origin of the soul, St. Augustine (De Libero Arbitrio iii., xxi., 59) enumerates three opinions. Some have held that all souls were created simultaneously at the beginning of the world and are infused into the bodies prepared for them when the fore-ordained

* It must be borne in mind, as I shall show more fully later on, that the severity of Pascal's teaching on this point is out of keeping with recognised catholic theology.

time of their earth-life arrives. Others have maintained that they are propagated with the body. The first of these opinions is at least conceivable, the second is inconceivable. The third opinion, which is commonly received in catholic philosophy, is that each soul is created when the body it is to animate is formed by natural generation. If one could maintain the first of these opinions it would be possible to consider each soul as having been cognisant of, and having consented to, Adam's sin. This, however, is not the received opinion of theologians nowadays, who hold the third view that all souls are created successively when the bodies are formed which they are to animate. Furthermore, they teach that the soul is contaminated with its birth-stain by the body it animates, the instrumental means by which this birth-stain of original sin is transmitted being precisely the generative act. Thus the soul enters upon its earthly course out of the grace

of God, and heavily handicapped by evil propensities. Certainly this is mysterious and incomprehensible to the last degree. And it is rendered all the more terrible by reflecting upon the eternal fate of a soul that departs this life out of God's grace. The second part of Pascal's thought is, that without the revealed doctrine of original sin, man becomes an insoluble enigma. The spectacle of mankind's depravity as we now see it, suggests that human nature cannot be as God originally intended that it should be. The natural tendency of things is towards good, but the testimony of our experience corroborates the inspired verdict of Holy Scripture that the tendency of the heart of man is towards evil. There is a hidden flaw somewhere, our nature on the moral side must have received a disastrous and damaging shock. This depravity is a simple fact, which stares us in the face at every turn of human life. Our poor sad world is so infected with the subtle poison

that we cannot enjoy any of its good things without presently finding in them the taint of our own corruption. It is the worst kill-joy that exists, haunting us wherever we go, and spoiling all our most innocent pleasures. Where it is left unchecked to pursue its course it produces enormities so hideous as to turn us sick with shuddering horror. It would be impossible to enumerate the blasphemies, the impieties, the deceits, the greed, the lust, the cruelty, the cowardice, the baseness and the pride of mankind. There is the fact plain to be seen, how account for it ?

The modern school of evolutionists think they have found a solution. It is, they say, nothing else but human nature working its way upwards from a brute origin. While frankly admitting that the theory of evolution has brought prominently into notice many great and fundamental facts in nature, still the brute origin of mankind remains utterly un-

proven, and to many seems highly improbable. Let us, however, concede, for the sake of argument, that the human body, with its passions and propensities, was evolved from lower forms ; and that when evolution had produced a body fitted to receive it, to that body was imparted a human soul* Even though we admit this hypothesis, we are no nearer a solution of our difficulty, for in the whole brute creation there is to be found nothing analogous to the immeasurable depths of man's wanton wickedness ; we do not see in human sinfulness mere brute nature cropping up, but brute nature hideously perverted, and over and above that the devilish wickedness of an immaterial essence ; it is not only that " man when he was in honour did not understand, he is compared to senseless beasts, and is

* The evolution of an immaterial soul from material energies is metaphysically impossible, as Professor Wallace himself allows. See " The Idea of Development " by the Author, page 30.

become like to them" (Ps. xlviii., 13), but further, "God saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that *all the thought of their heart* was bent upon evil at all times." (Gen. vi., 5.) We have only to read the history of the mighty pagan civilisations which have arisen in the world to be aware that culture and material progress do not change a man's heart for the better, but rather supply him with the means and power to perpetrate new and monstrous crimes. There is every indication that man is not struggling upwards from brute origins, but on the contrary that he has fallen from a high estate to depths of wickedness which the brute does not, and cannot, know.

St. Augustine (De Civ. Dei xxii., 22) draws a lurid picture of the depraved and miserable state of man in this present life, all arising from the infected root of original sin; he adduces this state of wretchedness in which we are as a proof that man has fallen from his first integrity,

and that the human race left to itself is in a state of damnation. A shrewd observer and powerful thinker of our own day, J. Godfrey Raupert, in "The Supreme Problem," reviews the corruption of the modern world, and concludes with St. Augustine that it all points to something radically and fundamentally wrong in our moral nature.

No one denies the fact that the state of human nature is not satisfactory; and most persons will concede that it cannot be normal. The whole question is about the cause of that fact. Sir Oliver Lodge scouts the christian doctrine of original sin through the Fall as utterly unthinkable. I can understand his position, though it is incompatible with the acceptance of christianity as a revealed religion, and, of course, he has no better explanation to offer. But I cannot understand the position of the Rev. W. H. Moberley, who thus writes in his article on "The Atonement" (Foundations, p. 283):

"What is important is not an historical 'Fall,' but the fact of 'fallenness.' It is the sense of contradiction involved in the human experience of sin which it is desired to emphasize. I am not, I feel, what I was meant to be; the whole human race is not what it was meant to be. Sin is universal, *but it is unnatural*, and this is well illustrated by the common phrase, 'Be a man!' There is a feeling of home-sickness in our yearnings for goodness." The "fact of fallenness" is universally recognized; what we want to know is the cause which will explain this fact. If, as Moberley rightly says, sin is unnatural, how is it to be accounted for? The old philosophers acknowledged a "state of fallenness"; what they did not know was the "historical Fall"; and how account for a "state of fallenness" without an "historical Fall?" Mr. Moberley's position is the refuge of despair, it plunges us back into the insoluble enigma from which we are rescued by a

frank acceptance of the revealed doctrine of Adam's Fall. All religions by their sacrifices, their austerities, their various rites of purification tacitly admit man's debased condition. All moralists, christian and heathen, acknowledge it, but can find no natural explanation of a fact so patent, yet so unaccountable. Mysterious though it be, the only explanation which makes the moral state of mankind at all intelligible, is the catholic doctrine of the Fall. That doctrine fully explains man's tendency towards evil, although it is itself inexplicable. To some extent the difficulty resolves itself into the more universal one of the existence of evil at all, but original sin and its transmission superadds further difficulties to the already great one of the existence of evil. It may, however, to some extent, receive a like answer, namely, that creation can have no meaning except it be to act as a channel for the manifestation of the attributes of the Deity, and that if evil

were not permitted, some of these adorable attributes could hardly be exhibited at all, or at least not so fully, such as God's mercy and justice and long-suffering : which attributes are so wonderfully manifested in the Passion of the Incarnate Word. Without sin no Passion, without the Passion much that we now know about God must have remained unknown. Further, we must remember that as it was in Adam's power to forfeit original justice for his posterity, so it was in his power to merit for all of us the grace of original justice, which, if we possessed, there would not be the spectacle of human sin and human misery now so plain to see, and which has been made a theatre for the display of some of the most lovable attributes of God.

Again, though we cannot understand the transmission of the sin of Adam, nor perceive the justice of it, yet it is strictly in accordance with what nature teaches us. St. Thomas strikes the right note

when he lays stress upon the solidarity of the human race. Modern researches more and more go to prove the truth of this, the solidarity of families and races and humanity at large, together with the potent influence of heredity. It is an unquestionable fact that all sorts of evils are transmitted by heredity, not excluding criminal tendencies of one kind and another, which render life miserable, and often, by imposing upon him such terrible difficulties in leading a right and moral life, seriously jeopardise a man's chance of saving his soul. If we were not so accustomed to all this, it would appear to us equally hard to reconcile the fact with divine justice, as it is for us to reconcile divine justice with the transmission of original sin. Why should a teetotaler be a martyr to the gout because his grandfather indulged to excess in port wine? Is it fair that a man should inherit tendencies of an appalling strength towards drink, theft or perverted sex instincts, so

that if he is to win his salvation, his whole life must be lived through under sternest self-repression : that he is doomed to ceaseless watchfulness and to struggles with himself, always severe, and sometimes reaching to the intensity of white-hot pain ? Or why is it that entire nations are sometimes afflicted with the most appalling calamities through the pride, the ambition, or the cupidity of their rulers ?

First explain the apparent injustices in nature, and after that it will be time enough to cavil at the apparent injustices in revelation.

The Fall of man in Adam and his restoration in Christ constitute the very backbone of the christian religion. Whosoever denies the history of Adam's transgression and its consequences will very soon deny the redeeming efficacy of Christ's death : nay, to be logical he must do so, for the two are indissolubly connected from the beginning of Genesis to

the end of the Apocalypse. Both are equally mysterious, or, if possible, our restoration in Christ is more incomprehensible than our Fall in Adam. Inexplicable though it be, we can yet come nearer to understanding our solidarity with Adam, whereby we inherit death, than our incorporation into the risen Christ, in Whom we are restored to life. If it is hard to understand how His death atoned for sin, in that He " was delivered up for our sins " (Rom. iv., 25), it is still more incomprehensible *how* His risen Body imparts life in that He " rose again for our justification " (ibidem). Christ is the offspring of Adam, to undo Adam's woeful work. If our Fall in Adam be denied, our restitution in Christ goes with it. Human life then becomes, as Pascal well says, wholly unintelligible, a tangled skein which cannot be unravelled. Many men, perhaps we must say most men, are content to take life as it is, asking no questions, except on those occasions when

even to the most thoughtless the terrible mystery of life is forced upon their notice. But serious men must ask themselves why there is so much evil and wretchedness upon earth : and the answer is only to be found in the doctrine of the Fall.

What life would have been like had Adam handed down to us original justice, we cannot now conceive. The Fall has made all the difference, our relations towards God and each other are radically changed. The history of the acceptance of Abel's sacrifice and the rejection of Cain's is highly instructive ; no doubt before the Fall God was worshipped by sacrifices symbolical of man's innocent state, there was no need of expiation by blood-shedding : Abel with a deeper spiritual insight than Cain perceived that a new kind of sacrifice was required to meet the new conditions, representing not only man's dependence upon his Creator, but also his own sinful case and the manner of his redemption. Abel sealed his testi-

mony to a future Redeemer with his own blood, the first of the martyrs of Jesus.

The catholic doctrine of original sin postulates a first man, Adam, in whom the whole of humanity subsisted as in its root, a perfect man type and fit progenitor of a perfect race. In him resided the grace of original justice, a grace of quite a different quality from any of the redeeming graces which we know, these may be greater, but are never the same as the grace of original justice. There is only one to whom Christ's redemption restored that singular and wonderful grace, His own Virgin Mother. As human nature subsisted in Adam, so in Adam it had its opportunity of retaining or forfeiting this great and unique grace of original justice. He failed at the test, and in him original justice was lost to the human race for ever. Consequently all his posterity are born out of the grace of God, and thus they remain until redeeming grace has supplied the loss of original justice.

Every child born into this world is born a child of wrath, at enmity with God, because humanity forfeited its primary grace when Adam fell. St. Thomas teaches, and it is now the received opinion, that souls which depart this world stained only by original sin, though they can never attain to the Beatific Vision, yet will be awarded natural happiness far exceeding anything we can imagine in this world : nor will they experience pain at the loss of the Beatific Vision, because they know that this loss is not the result of their own evil acts, and that no personal effort of their own could have avoided it. We gratefully accept this doctrine as something of a palliative to the fearful mystery of original sin ; at the same time, if original sin is fault, as indeed the Church teaches it to be, one can hardly be surprised at St. Augustine's painful conclusion that the sufferings of this life which fall to the lot of the unbaptized even before they are capable of actual sin,

are but an indication of the eternal sufferings of which they are the prelude. He argues that the whole world is in a state of damnation through original sin, and that those souls to which redeeming grace has not been applied must pay the forfeit of endless pain. And, indeed, it is difficult to see how the will, distorted and turned from its last end, can possibly be happy under such frustration. Only we must remember that the Beatific Vision is a supernatural end, and the soul which enters eternity stained only by original sin simply lapses into a state of pure nature. Besides, the natural happiness it enjoys is probably due to the Atonement. God's mercy and justice are both infinite, yet His power is shown chiefly in the exercise of mercy and pity. And we may well believe that the efficacy of Christ's redemption, though it does not open the gates of heaven to the soul to which it has not been applied by baptism, yet has merited an eternity of perfect

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natural happiness for the souls that have passed from this life with no stain upon them except that of original sin.

With the exceptions, always understood, of Christ and His Blessed Mother, every child of man is implicated in the fall of Adam, in whose loins the whole of the human race subsisted ere ever a man was born. This fall includes three features :—

1. The loss of the sanctifying grace of original justice.

2. The disorder of our nature, the balance of the faculties being disturbed, and even the natural faculties themselves being impaired and blunted. To a large extent we have lost dominion over the brute creation, and to a large extent we have lost dominion over the brute forces that have broken loose in ourselves.

3. Man has fallen under the subjection of the arch-enemy, Satan.

With regard to the stain or guilt of sin occasioned by the loss of original justice,

this is the same in all men, it does not admit of more and less.

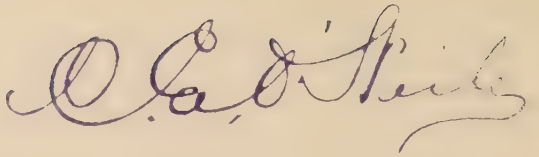
With regard to the disorder of our faculties a question arises. It is manifest that evil propensities are stronger in some than in others. Whether it is that the concupiscence resulting from the fall is unevenly distributed ; or whether it is that when the restraining power of original justice is removed the natural forces and passions within us break out differently, according to their varying strength in different individuals, just as according to the natural strength of the spring so will be the force of the rebound when the bolt is withdrawn : about this there is dispute. The latter view seems the more probable ; at any rate the question is speculative rather than practical ; and whichever way we take it, we may speak of the unruliness of our passions, etc., as the outcrop of original sin. This, however, must be carefully born in mind ; that even when the guilt of original sin is taken away

by the infusion of sanctifying grace, there still remains within us the rebellion of a disordered nature, for the just balance of our faculties depended in this world upon the grace of original justice and upon that alone; whatever graces we may now receive that particular grace has been lost for ever, and with it the just balance of our faculties which was attached thereto. Consequently man must now work out his salvation by a constant warfare against his evil inclinations and a sleepless vigilance to correspond with the redeeming graces which are so bountifully offered to him. Herein we see another reason for God's dispensation in permitting our fall in Adam: it is that we may be proved and made acceptable by a life-long contest under the banner of our Redeemer. No dispensation could have so made God known to us, no dispensation could have conferred such dignity upon man. Resistance to our temptations is a true martyrdom, a bearing witness, for by it

we bear witness under great stress and difficulty to the supremacy of the Divine Will and the sanctity of the Divine law. And evil by contrast gives a greater appreciation of the beauty of holiness. Rightly then the Church sings of Adam's Fall, "Oh! happy fault which merited to have such and so great a Redeemer."

Hard as is our lot since the Fall, it is not a hopeless lot. God might justly have left man in the state of damnation he had reduced himself to by the Fall. But instead of that He has given him the means of winning a brighter crown than he lost when he forfeited his first grace. It was necessary that man in the state of original justice should be put to the proof, in order to ensure that essential dignity of an intelligent nature, the free service of a free being. Surely, then, it is not an injustice, but a signal mercy, that God gives us the opportunity of freely regaining the Heaven we had freely lost. Even as regards our state in this world we are

not altogether unmitigatedly wretched, nor is human nature absolutely depraved. If it were it would be irredeemable, like a fallen angel. But there is much natural nobility left in mankind, "our form has not yet lost all its original brightness," we still bear about us numerous traces of what we were once and should be still. Neither must we exaggerate the unhappiness of this world, we have much happiness of which we are scarcely conscious, just as one is scarcely conscious of the joy of good health till one loses it. Unquestionably the good Father has cast much joy into the bitter portion of His erring children. And the kindnesses we receive through life from our fellow beings vastly outweigh the unkindnesses: the neighbour is unquestionably a good fellow, who is much more prone to inflict suffering upon us by his blundering efforts to please, than by any wilful spite. Yet taken on the whole, if this life were all, I fear we must pass the verdict that it is not worth living. To such a state are we reduced by the baleful heritage of original sin.



CHAPTER II

The Consequences of the Fall

"Man born of woman, living for a short time, is filled with many miseries."—Job xiv., 1.

Had man stood in original justice, he would have passed through a holy earth-life of ease and happiness, to be translated without death to his everlasting home. Or if, as some have thought, death would have intervened, it would have been unattended with suffering and dread, since it would have been the natural and easy passage from time to eternity, not as now the hard penalty of sin.

Fallen man must lead a life of toil and pain, he must suffer all manner of disease and calamity, and at the end of his pathway stand the dread portals of death. These are the penalties of his original sin.

Could we but trace it up, we should see that the bulk of human suffering is nearly or remotely, directly or indirectly, the result of human sin. It is the great mystery of evil and pain ; as the shadow follows the body so pain follows sin. And since all actual sins are rooted in the corruption of our nature, we may say that all the manifold miseries of life are resultant on Adam's Fall.

Let us, however, turn our attention to that which is the most immediate effect of the Fall, namely, loss of grace and the distortion of our nature.

Grace is that supernatural quality which alone can place an intelligent being in the friendship of God, or render him fit for the supernatural joys of heaven. Without it man or angel cannot be truly holy, nor is there anything else that can raise him to the supreme felicity of the Beatific Vision. It is the highest likeness of the Creator which is possible to the creature, a likeness which alone can en-

title him to be called a son of God. It is the impress of God's own holiness, a partaking of the Divine nature, a deification.

No loss, therefore, can be compared to the loss of God's grace. And this is the first and most awful result of original sin ; we are born into this world not in a state of grace, but at enmity with God. Moreover, since without God's grace fallen human nature is unable of itself to resist severe temptation, it follows that the soul deprived of original justice is morally certain soon to contaminate itself by actual sin, when reason sufficiently awakens to render it a responsible agent, and temptation assails it. A sufficient proof of this is to be found in the manifold corruption of all pagan countries, even the most civilised. Indeed, material civilisation, if history speaks true, appears to have little or no effect upon man's moral nature, unless it be to furnish him with greater power for offending his Creator.

Besides the loss of the grace of original

justice, a great enough evil in itself, we have further to reflect that our very nature has been grievously wounded and disordered by the fall. With the subtraction of original justice, the fountains of the great deep broke up, the nice balance of the faculties was overthrown, and natural laws were left to work themselves out in a nature deprived of grace, and not only deprived of grace, but distorted, wounded and thrown out of joint. What human nature would have been like if perfect in the natural order, yet not endowed with grace, we can form no conception. For all our experience is of humanity not in a condition of pure and perfect nature, but of humanity gone awry. According to St. Augustine the wound received in human nature through the Fall may be classed under two principal headings, ignorance and difficulty. The Ven. Bede further subdivides "difficulty" into malice, weakness and concupiscence. It is evident that ignorance

must be understood as the wound received in the intellect ; malice and weakness are the maladies of that faculty so nearly connected with the intellect, namely the will ; while concupiscence is the evil tendency resident in the inferior and more material powers of the soul.

Considering them in their proper order, we will first take ignorance.

St. Augustine maintains that what we commonly know as stupidity and slowness to learn is the result of original sin. So it is, but indirectly, inasmuch as the laws of heredity working in a corrupted nature will produce through bodily dispositions stupid people, idiots and criminal lunatics. In the state of original justice there would have been none of these things, and all men would have been immeasurably more quick and capacious of understanding than they are now, the faculties of the soul maintaining that just balance so necessary to clear thought, whereas now the inrush of uncontrollable fantasies

impairs and confuses the mental vision. Still, even in that happy state, there would have been diversities in acuteness of intellect just as there are now. Of course the infused science with which Adam was endowed was not transmitted to his fallen posterity, but just as man was doomed to eat bread in the sweat of his brow, so had he with labour and pain to learn the secrets of nature and constrain natural forces to his service : holy Scripture commemorates Jubal and Tubalcain as the first inventors, the pioneers in that illustrious line of men of genius to whom we owe the ceaseless march of material progress from the dawn of history to the present day.

The ignorance which has blighted our intelligence through the Fall though it throws its baleful shadow even over our power of discernment in merely mundane matters, must principally be referred to a certain moral darkness which renders us inept to discern the great spiritual truths

which surround us. It is an ignorance both in speculative and practical matters concerning the soul's true and eternal welfare ; and who can look around him in the world at large without confessing that the mind of man is strangely blinded in matters pertaining to that which alone is of supreme moment, his soul's good ? First take unregenerate humanity as seen in nations which have attained great heights of material civilisation, such as the ancient Egyptians, Greeks and Romans, or the modern Japanese. With the exception of a few individuals they were, and are, for the most part, either grossly superstitious or blankly infidel. Yet the existence of one God, creator and governor of the universe, is one of the truths of nature most clearly capable of demonstration. Not only that, but in all nations existed a belief in One Supreme Being, no doubt handed on through generations from the primeval revelation, for we find it even in savage races that are

quite incapable of reasoning it out for themselves. What more certain than that to this Being the homage and service of man is due: yet everywhere this great and primary truth is thrust into the background, inoperative and overlaid by a cloud of hideous superstitions. The same as regards their conduct, the natural law of right and wrong is discernible by reason, and likewise most probably handed on by tradition. Yet amongst pagan peoples it is at best very partially observed, and often its flagrant violation is deemed virtue.

So much for human nature unwashed in the waters of regeneration. But also in regenerate humanity, the evil still remains of a corrupted nature, even when the guilt and stain of original sin have been done away. We find the same mental darkness diminished indeed, but by no means wholly dispelled, whether in regard to speculative or practical spiritual truth. We painfully make our way up-

wards to clearer light little by little. Prayer, meditation, the study of spiritual questions, do not come easy to us at first, it is only by persistent and unwearied effort, aided by the constant succours of God's grace that the darkness is gradually dissipated, and we begin to relish the things of the spirit and to adjust the values of the affairs of time and eternity. We know this in ourselves from our own personal experience, we become aware of it in others if we have had anything to do with working for souls. As an instance, reflect how hard it is to convert even baptised persons from heresy to the true faith. When Our Lord founded His Church and left the Faith in its keeping, threatening eternal damnation to all who would not receive that Faith, we might be sure that He would furnish men with evidences amply sufficient to ensure an intelligent submission to the Church's teaching. He has done so, the evidences for catholicism are so cogent as to be almost overwhelm-

ing. Indeed, the surest proof of the divinity of the Catholic Church is the fact of her existence : such a society could not possibly have existed all these centuries unless it were a Divine institution. Yet how difficult it is to make a man perceive the weight of these evidences, so difficult that one is sometimes inclined to say that the clearest argument, and the most convincing logic, are valueless towards conversion. How can you account for this except that a mysterious veil lies over the mind's eye, rendering it weak to perceive spiritual truth, just as the eye of the bat is dazzled by the brightness of day ? We must strive by prayer and effort to purge and rectify the soul's vision, otherwise we shall not be held excusable for rejection of the Faith. Why should Divine faith present such difficulties to our acceptance when vastly the greater part of our other knowledge is grounded on merely human faith ? Many and many a one there is who does not see the obligation he is

under of accepting the full faith and entering into the Church of God, who will not therefore be excused because he does not see his duty, for he ought to see it, and he could see it, if he would but co-operate with the grace which is being held out to him, and use his own efforts, prompted and seconded by that grace, to burst through the thick veil of darkness which surrounds him. The proclamation of the truth is the touchstone which reveals those latent evil dispositions which are the cause of the actual sin of unbelief when the test is put. In that day when the subconscious self yields up its secrets we shall know that our Saviour's judgment was just when He said that it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrha in the final reckoning, than for the cities which refused to receive the Faith. (Matt. x., 15.) For all that, we must remember that it is quite impossible for us to judge whether a man is sinning against light. The Searcher of Hearts

alone can know how the creature is responding to the promptings of grace. To us it may seem that the evidences before such an one are quite sufficient to render his rejection of the truth a culpable act; but so subtle are the intricacies of the human spirit that in reality his ignorance may be all the while invincible. And it is quite certain that the earnest seeker after truth will not be abandoned by God.

What we now witness in the difficulty which souls experience in perceiving the truth, and advancing from an imperfect to the perfect form of Christianity, was witnessed in the early ages of the Church, when first she supplanted Judaism. Think of the evidences presented to the Jews that Christ was the true Messiah proclaimed by prophecy, yet only a few, and those with difficulty and tardiness and sometimes back-slidings, succeeded in apprehending the momentous truth. Take the single example of St. Paul, he was a

man of almost superhuman intelligence, and he was about as well read in the prophecies of his nation as anyone could possibly be, moreover, he had before his eyes all the evidences of our Lord's mighty works and wondrous teaching ; he knew all about the facts of the Resurrection, for it was current knowledge of the time ; he had, in fact, right before him all those evidences for christianity which our Lord deemed amply sufficient to persuade men to the acceptance of His Faith, and to render them inexcusable if they rejected it. And though St. Paul had succeeded in convincing himself that he was doing God's work in seeking to exterminate the infant Church, yet the All-seeing Eye which watched over him perceived otherwise: that in reality he was doing violence to his own conscience, that he was " kicking against the goad." (Acts ix., 5.) Nevertheless, but for an astounding miracle of grace he would have lived and died a malignant and ferocious Pharisee, rebel-

ling with all his might against God. Can one contemplate this striking example without being convinced that the human intellect in fallen man, however great its natural power, is dim and blear-eyed where spiritual truth is concerned? In working out our salvation it is our bounden duty to do what we can by prayer and effort to co-operate with God's grace in breaking through the darkness that surrounds us. Otherwise we shall be found as inexcusable as those old pagans who sinned against the light of nature corroborating the ancient revelation, and who "worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator." (Rom. i., 17-25.) Like them we should be found inexcusable, and like them incur the eternal wrath of God. It is part of this abnormal blindness that we cannot realise the malignity of sin, a veil has fallen between ourselves and God, the greatness of His beauty is hidden from us, and consequently the deformity of anything

which is at variance with His holiness is but dimly perceived. One of the chief missions, therefore, of the Holy Spirit in the order of redeeming grace is to "convince the world of sin." (St. John xvi., 8.)

Even under the full light of faith, we are still conscious of this blindness of the understanding, which is one of the sad heritages of Adam's fall. A fool can see that the concerns of eternity are beyond any comparison more important than the concerns of a brief earthly life. Yet even good and devout Catholics evince a most ludicrously disproportioned appreciation of the relative values of the things of time and the things of eternity. How is it that you meet with an old man tottering on the brink of the grave, full of anxious interest about his worldly concerns or current politics, but who finds it wearisome to spend half-an-hour preparing his soul to stand before the judgment seat of God? It is not that he has no faith, he believes

most firmly all that is taught by the Church, but his poor darkened intellect cannot perceive the worthlessness of the life which is passing away, and the tremendous importance of the new state of existence upon which he is about to enter. Could anything possibly be of greater importance than how we stand with God? Is there anything that more urgently claims our attention than our relation to the Creator? Yet how many give it the last place in their thoughts, if they give it any place at all. No one can consider such things as these and assert that the human intelligence is normal and healthy. It is not; on the contrary, it is diseased as the result of the Fall. As Pascal says, such blindness cannot be natural, it is abnormal. Man has fallen from supernatural heights and his nature has been crippled by the Fall. Humanity is like the poor man in the parable of the Good Samaritan, "wounded and half dead."

Conscious of the darkness which en-

velopes them, why do not men strive more to break through that darkness? Because they are attached to it, the light hurts their weak eyes, and it is a relief to hide under the thick cloud of darkness, and persuade themselves that all is well. "Men loved darkness rather than the light." (John iii., 19.) Why should men *love* darkness? This brings us to the second great wound our nature has received by the Fall, namely a malicious inclination of the will. The will and the understanding so interact one upon the other that it is impossible to know how far resistance of truth results from the darkness of the intellect, and how far from the malice of the will. Both ignorance and malice are the heritage of the Fall, and both together are impediments in the apprehension of truth and the pursuit of virtue.

This malice of which we speak is a certain bent of the will towards illicit objects, a proneness to evil, in God's own

words, " the imagination and thought of man's heart are prone to evil from his youth." (Gen. viii., 21.) It is sad, but true ; our own personal experience, and the whole history of the world, testify that man finds virtue distasteful and vice attractive. In childhood we must be disciplined to virtue by others, in adult age we must discipline ourselves to virtue, for our inclinations tend to vice. " If thou give to thy soul her desires, she will make thee a joy to thy enemies." (Eccl. xviii., 31.) The different forms of asceticism practised in all religions is a tacit recognition of the depravity of our inclinations. The same is attested to in Holy Scripture by its injunctions of fasting and mortification, while nearly all persons commemorated therein for sanctity of life are represented as having practised austerities, and the practice is approved by the example of our Lord Himself. Just as the soldier must be drilled and disciplined, if he is to become

an efficient warrior, so the soul must be exercised in hardship and self-denial if it is to triumph over its evil tendencies. It is the inevitable condition for the restoring of a nature fallen and depraved. The fact that to lead a good life entails the doing violence to our inclinations, shows clearly enough that our will has contracted an evil bent which must be laboriously rectified if ever we are to come to any good.

The second wound in our will is weakness. We find ourselves sluggish and cowardly in undertaking anything unpleasant, however clearly we may perceive the spiritual benefit accruing to us therefrom, and this pitiable weakness is often most evident in men who in other matters are endowed with a singularly strong character. We know that if we are to acquire a certain virtue we must exercise ourselves in the acts of that virtue till it be formed into a habit. We shrink from the effort, our weak will hangs back

from the arduous enterprise. Many never make a serious effort, those who do essay it find it hard to sustain. Can anyone with the slightest cognizance of human nature in himself or others deny the fact of this strange languor of the will? Often a very slight temptation is sufficient to bring our resolutions to the ground, so feeble are we in good. When we know so well that virtue is desirable and profitable while vice is odious and baneful, surely this unaccountable slackness is not natural, but the outcome of a diseased and unnatural condition.

The fourth wound in our nature resulting from the Fall has to do with the lower and more material powers of the soul; it is called concupiscence. The animal nature within us has broken loose from control, and if we are to keep it in subjection we must be constantly doing battle with ourselves. St. Paul graphically describes this conflict in the seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, "I

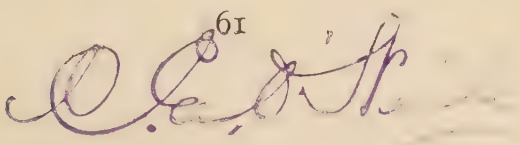
find then a law, that when I have a will to do good, evil is present with me. For I am delighted with the law of God, according to the inward man; but I see another law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind, and captivating me in the law of sin, that is in my members." An intelligent being must necessarily by its very nature appreciate truth and virtue, and detest error and vice, just as the eye must delight in pleasant colours and the ear in agreeable sounds. No amount of corruption or sin can destroy or take away in the least that which is inherent in a thing by nature. We cannot delight in error and evil for their own sake. But we find the utmost difficulty in repudiating sensible delights, however illicit and contrary to the law of reason, which our sensitive nature is constantly putting before us, whether we will or no. It causes us the acutest distress that when we are endeavouring to set our mind and heart on the things of God and

eternity, our unruly passions and imaginations break in upon us like untamed beasts, turbulent, importunate, not to be gainsaid. In the state of original justice we should have relished sensible delights as keenly as or more keenly than we do now, but always in accordance with right reason and in so far as they were conducive to our last end, which would have been ever our supreme and unfailing delight. It is far otherwise with fallen man ; our fancy becomes filled with all sorts of impertinent and sometimes detestable images when we would be at prayer, and despite all our efforts to banish them, they recur again and again ; when we desire to be at peace the remembrance of some wrong done to ourselves or others we are interested in forces itself unbidden to the memory, bringing with it a lava-torrent of uncontrollable anger, and it requires long-sustained and severest inward wrestlings before we can choke it down ; commonest and most besetting of

all are the lusts of sexual passion, often distorted to grotesque and horrible deformity, but strong and overmastering as a whirlwind; it is here that the concupiscence in our fallen nature reaches its summit, so much so that it is reputed to have some mysterious connection with Adam's sin, and it is held by theologians to be the motive-power which transmits the birth-stain from generation to generation; nothing else is responsible for so much crime and so much sorrow in the sad annals of the human race; nothing else causes such struggles and such humiliation to the man who would seek after holiness, marring for him all the pleasant places of life, disturbing his peace at every turn, spoiling every innocent enjoyment by tormenting scruples and self-questionings. Is it natural that we should have so little control over our baser nature? Is it in accordance with right law that the lower should so tyrannize over the higher? No! it is not natural,

but it is nature vitiated and debased. These things are patent facts which cannot be denied, even by those who scout the christian explanation of them; but however much they may deride the doctrine of original sin, it is none the less certain that no other in the least plausible explanation of human depravity has ever been put forward. Can it be natural: can it be in accordance with the intention and design of the Creator: that compared with mankind wolves are gentle and monkeys chaste? Yet the history of humanity exhibits countless examples of ferocities more savage than are to be found amongst the fiercest wild animals, of impurities which would disgrace the most unclean of beasts.

Such being the state to which mankind has been reduced by Adam's sin, it is no wonder that it should have fallen under the dominion of Satan a scarce-resisting victim. His proud boast as he showed the kingdoms of the earth to our Saviour



claiming them as his own possession was not an empty boast, for outside Judea there existed no kingdom that was not given up to idolatry and all manner of wickedness. We can scarcely have any conception of angelic power; a fallen angel cannot move our will immediately, for to do this belongs to God alone, but a demon can lay such stress upon us by the forceful appeal he makes to the senses of our body, both exterior and interior, by imprinting images upon the fancy, and exciting the passions with such pitiless insistency, that the human will, already weak in virtue, and prone of itself to evil, cannot of its own strength withstand the strain. And so before Christ's coming human nature went on its way, plunging into deeper and deeper corruption; the moral standing of races that advanced towards the heights of civilisation, showing no advantage over the races that retrogressed to the depths of savagery. In either case the Fall worked out in-

exorably its sequel of ever augmenting misery and sin.

CHAPTER III

The State of Fallen Man

"For behold I was conceived in iniquities : and in sins did my mother conceive me."—Ps. l., 7.

From the difficulty which baptized and professing Christians experience in the pursuit of holiness, and the frequency of their lapses, we may gather some idea of how pitiable is the state of unregenerate human nature. With a darkened intellect, a will quick to evil and slow to good, and with unruly senses, it became the sport of the tyrannous bad angel who had usurped the sceptre of God. No wonder that the history of the pagan world presents to us a dismal picture : idolatry universal, cruelty and license rampant everywhere, human sacrifices, infanticide, unnatural lusts, selfishness, greed, ambition,

no regard for human suffering! Such was the normal state of things as recorded in pagan history and pagan literature. As the illustrious names of heathendom pass before the mind's eye, we are often left wondering whether they were more remarkable for the splendour of their achievements or for the enormity of their crimes. Yet with a singular ingratitude the immense betterment of the world, the total change in public opinion wrought by christianity, is too often forgotten, and proud man fondly imagines that he has raised himself from the mire. The tendency of a great deal of modern thought is not to refer the blessings of christian civilization to their true source, but to look upon them as exclusively the outcome of human nature's own efforts to raise itself. This pride of the heart makes one look anxiously to the future. As pride was the root of Adam's sin, so pride is the root of all subsequent sin. For every sin is an assertion by the creature of

its independence of the Creator. This is true even of such sins as pusillanimity, and despair, though at first sight they might seem to have no connection with pride, but rather the reverse. Yet if we consider them more attentively we perceive that pusillanimity and despair are grounded on man's trust in his own self, and when he fails himself he is undone : so that it is the pride of self sufficiency that is really at the bottom of such sins. Whensoever any excellence becomes self-assertive it at once loses its lustre, and eventually disappears altogether. As humility is the sure passport to Heaven, so is pride the certain road to Hell. We are, therefore, justly apprehensive that this spirit of pride which attributes our christian civilization to man's own native energy, and denies that it is the work of Christ, may eventually plunge society back into the miserable state from which He rescued it. The influence of christianity is so potent that it has pene-

trated far beyond its own borders, and there is now hardly a people so remote that it has not felt that influence and received from it some alteration for the better. So that if we would really get a just estimate of the benefits it has conferred upon the world, we must go back to the state of society and public opinion before the coming of Christ. Even now, though non-christian countries are much more under the influence of christian ideals than the people themselves are aware of, and though christian countries fall so far short of what they should be, nevertheless the difference in the moral atmosphere between a christian and a non-christian country is sufficiently pronounced to show the immense change which has been wrought by christianity.

One might ask, why is it that christian countries are so un-christian? And why does the individual find it so hard to realize in himself the truly christian life? The answer is, that though the healing

properties of God's grace have done much towards restoring our fallen nature, they have not by any means wholly taken away our inborn corruption; the integrity of our nature was lost with original justice, and it will not be completely restored except by the gift of glory in the world to come, when the body will rise again, spiritualized and glorified, having been purged of every vestige of its earthly corruption. Moreover, every act of sin is a set-back, and repeated acts of sin form habits ; then, the natural laws of heredity have full play for evil as well as for good ; there is no longer any barrier to natural forces since original justice was lost. Consequently, in christian society as in the individual, human life exhibits a perpetual warfare, the battle swaying sometimes this way and sometimes that.

When we consider all this, the hideous nightmare of human life before Christ's coming, the benighted and corrupt state of the modern heathen or moslem world, and

the little satisfactory condition of christendom, the lot of man appears most deplorable, especially when we reflect that with so heavy a handicap against us, yet if we break down in the race and pass out of the world in a state of mortal sin, we shall exchange the miseries of this life for miseries inconceivably worse in intensity and eternal in duration. We are constrained sometimes to question how can a good God have allowed His creation to come to such a pass? And why are not still more potent succours granted to us in our weakness? But we must remember, mysterious though it may be, that we flung away eternal life when we fell from original justice. Once we lose sight of this truth human life becomes absolutely inexplicable; but granted this which revelation has made known to us, we perceive that we have no claim of justice upon God whatsoever, we might all with perfect justice have been left irretrievably to perish. We cannot, therefore, say

that God ought to concede to us greater and more compelling assistance than He does, or complain that even after Christ's redemption the creation of man still remains a divine failure. One might, with more reason, say that a fallen angel is a divine failure, for in a fallen angel a whole species was lost, and lost irreparably. There is no doubt that the Fathers and Doctors of the Church have been practically unanimous in the opinion that the number of those who attain salvation, though immense in itself, is yet small in comparison with the number of the lost. The utterances of our Lord seem rather to countenance this, though they cannot be called quite definite on the point ; while a general survey of the history of the world obliges one sorrowfully to admit the probability of this dismal conclusion. However, the real difficulty is that a loving God should mete out everlasting punishment to one single intelligent being ; once admit that, as it must be admitted

by all who hold the christian faith, then numbers do not alter the state of the question ; if a million or a million million have rebelled against God like that one, so like that one they must undergo the same eternal penalty.* But, it must be borne in mind that eternal punishment is only the lot of a will malignant in evil, which would rather endure all the pains of hell than turn to God by repentance. For my part I must confess that when we consider the stubbornness of souls in resisting grace, their contempt for God's revelation, their stupid pride, and often their incredible disregard for the sufferings of their fellow-beings in the pursuit of their own selfish ends ; and remember that though they would like to be everlastingly happy if they could keep their pride, their rebellion and their selfishness,

* Although indeed the fact that the human race constitutes one great family, and that the Word of God has entered into this family through the Incarnation, makes us exceedingly loth to entertain the thought that the majority of mankind fail to attain eternal beatitude : our sense of brotherhood with the rest of the world renders the notion singularly repugnant.

yet they would face anything rather than give up these : it seems to me that eternal suffering is the only possible state for souls eternally obstinate.

Besides, in comparing the numbers of the saved with the lost, we ought to discount that vast multitude of souls which, having only original sin to answer for, will, according to theologians, enjoy a natural happiness greater than anything we can conceive of here. And, moreover, though up to the present, as far as we can gather, the spiritual failures would seem to have been many more than the spiritual successes, yet God alone knows the hearts of His creatures in the past, nor do we know what are to be the conquests of His grace in future times, when the earth is fully peopled : it may be that the triumphs of the Church then will make up in a few generations for all the losses that have gone before.

Finally, the question is wholly unprofitable to ourselves, and we had better

leave it in the hands of God, while trying to secure our own salvation, and to help forward as many others as we can in the same holy quest.

One thing is sure, that no satisfactory explanation of the enigma of human life has ever been given except the christian explanation, that man fell in our first parent Adam, and is born into this world alienated from the life of God. As I have already said, the keynote of the whole christian dispensation is the Fall of man in Adam, and his restoration in Christ. Whosoever denies the first must necessarily deny the second, for unless he admits the sin of the first man Adam, and its transmission to all his posterity, the life, the teaching, and the death of Christ become meaningless. Many nowadays do deny all this, thereby furnishing the christian with further reflections upon the spiritual darkness of the intellect, and the malignity of the will left in human nature by original sin : and the hopeless case of

those who will to enter upon eternity without Christ.

The picture is truly dark, neither would I seek to minimize the obstacles and difficulties which lie in the way of the soul as it journeys towards heaven. But we must look these in the face unflinchingly and pluck up courage to overcome them at all costs. If we accept revelation at all we must take the stern truths equally with the consoling, for both are an integral part of revelation. And those little know the Church of God who think that she will abate Our Lord's teaching to suit the liking of a soft generation. The battle is before us and we cannot shirk it if we would, let us then face it like men.

Gloomy though the prospect of man's life upon earth may be, yet it is not wholly dark. Corrupt as human nature is, yet it is not wholly depraved. In an intelligent being, by its very nature, there exists an appreciation of that which is true and good, and a craving thereafter,

however ineffectual ; this whilst it constitutes the torment of the damned, is yet the hope of the living. This much, of course, is true, even of a fallen angel ; there is not in hell a spirit devoid of this ineradicable craving after the good and true, for the intellect is made to know truth and the will to love good. Truth and goodness are the natural and necessary objects of intelligence and will : the natural tendency of anything can never be taken from it, or it would cease to be what it is. So that to the mind and will which go astray falsity always appears as truth, and evil is desired under the guise of good : it is simply a case of misplacing the apparent and immediate for the real and ultimate. But there is a great and radical difference between the angelic and the human intelligence : an angel sees the object of its election at one glance, for its power is intuitive, and if it has misplaced the false for the true, its error is irremediable, it has erred once, wholly and for

ever. The will is always in keeping with the intellect, for it is the power whereby we tend towards the object perceived by the intelligence, consequently the angel's will following the apprehension of its intellect elects irretrievably, whether for good or evil, for weal or woe. There is no going back : it chooses, and by virtue of its very nature the angel's choice is irrevocable. There is something most magnificent about an angelic being when we thus consider it : at one glance he sees in all its glaring light the awful question, " Shall I worship and serve God ? or shall I worship and serve myself ? " If he places his ultimate happiness in the former, he does so with all his force and attains beatitude to the full capacity of his nature : if he places his beatitude in the latter, he does so with all his might, and becomes in an instant as bad and as wretched as he can possibly be; just as the holy angel could not be better, so the bad angel could not be worse, his whole

mighty nature to its full power has plunged into evil in that one moment of election. "I saw Satan *like lightning* falling from heaven." (Luke x., 18.)

Far otherwise is it with the mind of man: we are not pure intelligences, but beings compounded of soul and body. Our intellect is ministered to by the bodily senses which present to it objects for abstraction, slowly we piece things together, reasoning step by step, we halt, we hesitate, we revoke our decisions; if we elect good, it is not always wholeheartedly: if we choose evil, it is with a backward glance of regret. The angel knows no regrets. By reason then of the constitution of our nature fallen man is redeemable till death has put him on a par with the angels by depriving him of his ministering body. The angel by his sin has placed an irremovable impediment to the attainment of beatitude, man by his Fall has placed an impediment to his beatitude which is capable of being re-

moved, and though every actual sin adds to this impediment, it never becomes quite irremovable while life lasts, because his discoursive reason has at least this advantage over angelic vision, that he is able to unravel his faulty conclusions, resolving them into the false principles from which he started, and so to retrace his steps and start afresh. True, he cannot recover the supernatural by his own efforts, for the supernatural, as the term denotes, is something above the powers of nature. But we shall see in the sequel that God has put it in man's power even to regain the wonderful gift of grace.

Certainly experience teaches us that even unregenerate human nature is not wholly bad, it is infirm and corrupt indeed, but not altogether devoid of natural virtue and many lovable qualities. It is capable of kindliness, self-sacrifice, patriotism, natural affection. It is even capable of a certain natural love of God : an esteem of Him as the all-wise, all-

powerful Creator. And here let it be noted, that this natural love of God as Creator is not the love which springs from faith and consequently cannot justify a soul, it is a good beginning, no more. We must love God as faith presents Him to us as "the rewarder of them that seek Him." (Heb. xi., 6.) That is to say, we must love Him as the *object of our beatitude.* I draw attention to this for although in practice no one loves God above all things except by supernatural charity, still it is possible to have a certain natural esteem of the Creator without having true charity, and there are many who speak of God in high-sounding terms, who yet are not in a state of grace. Christ has told us so, "not everyone that saith to Me Lord! Lord! shall enter into the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. vii., 21.)

To return to our subject: we contemplate fallen human nature, dim-sighted, prone to evil, weak for good,

disordered in its passions, a prey to the powers of darkness. Yet with many noble qualities left, with an ever-recurring sense of its hapless state, and with struggling aspirations towards better things, it is certainly an object of pity. We see around us persons with evil tendencies which we are not conscious of in ourselves. We should pity, not despise and spurn them. Original sin has broken out in them differently from what it has done in us. If we look within ourselves we shall see plenty of matter for censure, which perhaps they have not. Nature has broken loose and gone off into all sorts of unsightly distortions, it is ill-regulated, it produces monstrous forms. One has this dreadful craving, another has that. Let us learn to pity each other, since all are objects of pity.

Above all let us remember that humanity cannot right itself; it flung away original justice and never can regain it.

It may receive other redeeming graces which will restore it to the sonship of God, which will pour a healing balm into its wounds so efficacious that in the saints it would almost seem as though the self-dominion of original justice were regained. But this is not the case, original justice was something unique, when man lost it, he lost it for ever.

Vain then are the panaceas of politicians and philanthropists. If they think to stamp out evil, it can only be by stamping out the human race. Let Eugenists weed out the unfit as carefully as they will, in the select remainder out will crop the old Adam. All attempts to regenerate human society, unless we recognise the root of the evil and apply the only remedy given us, are foredoomed to failure. The French Revolution began with philanthropy and ended in torrents of blood. A de-christianized population does not tend to become more moral, more contented and more unselfish. Despite

the dreams of Socialists, Pacificists and others of that ilk, there appears no likelihood that this world will ever be anything but a place of blood and tears. If ever war is abolished it will be through the influence of the Prince of Peace, but the warfare between good and evil in the individual and in society must go on till the end of all things when Christ will take His great power and reign. For the reversal of Adam's woeful work is only begun in this world, it will be consummated in the next. Our rebellious nature often finds the christian law irksome, but when it throws it off, humanity cuts a poor figure left to its own resources. And those who pose as its self-constituted benefactors in the end often prove to be most unmitigated tyrants when the power is in their hands.

As long as original sin exists, human cupidity and lust of power will exist: such being the case the probabilities are that latent antagonisms will sometimes

break out into external acts of violence, and to the end of the world we shall see the same sad spectacle of crime, misery and war.

Human nature is fallen but not irreparably fallen, and humanity is wretched but not altogether wretched. Though life is full of sadness and oh! so disappointing, yet the world itself is a good place, so beautiful when seen at its best, that imagination fails to depict anything more beautiful. And we have many joys in the midst of our sorrows, many consolations to make up for the disappointments. In fact just as St. Augustine argues that the miseries of life are a proof of God's displeasure and that the human race is in a state of damnation, so we may argue that the many happinesses He showers on our pathway are a proof that God did not intend to leave us in this evil case, but that He purposed to draw us out of it, at least to give us the means of rehabilitating ourselves if only we will

fulfil His requirements to that end.

Wherefore at the very time when He utters sentence against Adam and his posterity for their sin, He gives promise of a second Adam and a second Eve to repair the damage wrought by the first. Just as it was the sin of the man Adam which has infected all his children though Eve co-operated by inducing him to sin, so it will be the second Adam who shall work redemption, but the second Eve shall co-operate therein by becoming mother of the Redeemer and assenting to the manner of His redemption. A motherhood of sorrow is Eve's legacy to Mary. But the sinful suffering world has something to look forward to in the advent of the Woman and her Seed.

After this first promise of a Redeemer, God appears to withdraw Himself, and man is left to work out with remorseless precision the bitter logic of the Fall. Man speedily corrupts his way upon earth and is destroyed by the deluge, but the

human seed is preserved and a fresh start made through the offspring of Noe. Again man multiplies upon the earth and again his native corruption precipitates him into an abyss of sin. The promise is renewed to Abraham that in his seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed. But henceforth the divine secret is treasured in the keeping of the people which sprang from him. In the series of the prophets of this nation the titles whereby the Redeemer might be known are indicated with an evergrowing clearness of detail.

Amongst other things it was predicted that He should come of the tribe of Judah and the stock of David, that He should be born of a Virgin at Bethlehem : when the royal authority had passed away from Judah : that He should be "God with us" having besides His temporal generation, a generation which is from the days of eternity : that He should do works of healing and should

preach to the poor : that He should be rejected by the great body of His own people : that He should be betrayed, reviled, buffetted and scourged : that He should lay down His life for sin : that He should be crucified, the details of His death by crucifixion being described with minute exactness : that He should rise from the dead His flesh not seeing corruption : that He should ascend into Heaven having founded upon earth a world-wide empire to endure for ever.

All this has been accurately fulfilled in what the gospels relate about Jesus of Nazareth and what we see in the extent, power and permanence of the Catholic Church.

CHAPTER IV

Redemption

"I know that my Redeemer liveth."—Job xix., 25.

As a harbinger of peace and reconciliation, the only one in whom the grace of Christ triumphed completely even in this world, Mary Immaculate is born. Christendom of to-day finds new hope and consolation in the Immaculate Conception of Our Lady, the first grace to be conceded Her by God, the last to be proclaimed by His Church to a weary and feverish world. On the heart sickened by the sense of the wickedness of mankind, on the soul withering under the furnace-blast of its own evil passions, the name of Mary breathes like the cool air of morning after a night of stifling heat.

Whosoever would successfully fight

against his own original corruption cannot do better than cultivate the tenderest devotion to the Virgin Mother of God. It is the mark of a predestinate soul. Gonzalo Pizarro, the youngest of the four brothers who conquered Peru, was all his life a man of blood and a man of Belial, yet with a Spaniard's faith he always had the truest devotion to the Virgin Mary, a devotion one would have thought so out of keeping with his reckless character ; his death was as edifying as his life had been dissolute and stormy. One among the thousands of examples which show the value of being a client of Mary. She was a fitting mother for Jesus Christ, and Her dear name is inseparably connected with His in the work of redemption. She is the second Eve as He is the second Adam, She is the perfect woman as He is the perfect man. She exhibits in Her own person humanity's co-operation with God in the task of restoring it from its fallen state. She

is the one spotless Lily, the pride of our sin-stained race. Of Her was born Jesus who is called Christ, the Saviour of the World.

According to St. Thomas the primary action of redemption is to counteract original sin, this is reasonable since original sin is the root of all actual sin. Christ's redemption has a threefold virtue —the giving of a ransom great enough to satisfy Divine justice, the procuring of grace forfeited by man through the Fall, and the healing of the wounds in our nature inchoatively in this world, to be perfected in the next.

The way in which the Incarnate Word satisfied Divine justice for the sin of man must always remain the most entrancing theme for the preacher, the writer or the artist. Nothing has ever extorted human devotion like the Passion and Death of Christ, nothing has ever so influenced the lives of men. And now after two thousand years it is as operative as ever,

calling forth an abandonment of love and homage that has no parallel, nothing that even distantly approaches it. Inspiring men and women to the highest heroism of self-sacrifice, just as it did in the first ages of Christianity. It is the most vital force existing in the world at the present day, despite all the wasting criticism that has been levelled against it, despite the devilish hatred it evokes in those to whom it is a standing rebuke and an undying menace. It was prefigured in the sacrifices of the ancient law, which bore witness that without blood-shedding there could be no remission of sin, and which shadowed forth the blood-shedding of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. It may appear to us strange that God should have required so terrible an atonement for sin, yet it is not altogether without analogy in nature that gross insult can only be washed out in blood.

At each step of the awful drama Our

Lord suffers some torment appropriate to one or other of the countless and many-hued sins wherewith men outrage the Divine Majesty. They yield their bodies to luxury, His is scourged : they seek honours, mockery is His portion : they swell with pride, He is crowned with thorns : they hate obedience, His hands and feet are nailed : they wallow in excesses, He thirsts : they sin, He dies. Oh ! it is consoling and fortifying to ourselves when we fight against some temptation to reflect that we are bearing with Our Lord the agony, the scourging, the crowning with thorns or some other of His ignominies and sufferings.

The ransom paid by Christ in the laying down of His most precious life satisfies Divine justice, and obtains for all men once more access to God's grace lost by them through original sin. When, however, we come to its application to individual souls and consider the enormous diversity in the chances and oppor-

tunities within the reach of the different units of the human family, we find ourselves involved in difficulties so great that a satisfactory solution of them becomes hopeless, and we are fain to leave the mysteries of God's providence to His just but inscrutable judgments. We must speak, then, to those whose opportunities are manifest. In the first place they must be impressed with the conviction that nothing is valuable like grace. Between grace and any other goods whatsoever, whether of intellect, or pleasure, or honour, or fortune there is simply no comparison. Grace makes us partakers of the Divine Beatitude itself, it admits us to eternal happiness immeasurably beyond our utmost powers to conceive. In dignity and blessedness it infinitely surpasses anything that this world affords, and he alone is truly great, truly rich, truly happy who is great in grace. The least measure of grace makes a man more blessed, more honourable,

more powerful, more noble, than could the dominion, the riches, the homage of the whole earth confer upon him who has not grace. By grace we become the sons of God, and heirs to the Beatific Vision in the Kingdom of Heaven. However much we may have set our heart upon a thing we must be prepared to give it all up rather than to forfeit that inestimable treasure, the grace of God. As eternity is above time, as God is above all His creatures, by so much is grace better than anything else whatsoever. To all God offers His grace and with the offer He prompts the will by a corresponding motion towards its acceptance. If we would know the blight left upon our faculties by original sin it is sufficient to consider how great a thing is grace, and yet how little men realize its value and how tardily they co-operate with it.

The first grace and foundation of all the rest, without which no supernatural life is possible is the grace of faith. Faith

is the gateway to all spiritual riches and to everlasting life ; there is nothing that Our Lord more frequently insists upon than that we must believe if we are to be saved. Nevertheless men will exercise the utmost ingenuity in excusing themselves from this first and paramount duty which the gospel lays upon them. It appears to them a burden and a slavery, they will do all they can to smother the promptings they feel, they dare not look in the face the obvious meaning of Christ's words, they will embrace the most improbable theories, resort to the most ludicrous subterfuges, strain the sense of a phrase to any extent, arbitrarily suppress awkward passages, stubbornly turn away their gaze from convincing evidence and magnify a thousandfold trivial difficulties, they will do anything and everything rather than submit their minds to the faith which alone can win them salvation. There must be indeed a great merit in faith

with all the restraints it puts upon mind and heart: while some go their way plucking where they please, thinking their own thoughts untrammelled, dreaming their own dreams freely, making conscience coincident with desire. Yet this is not Christ's way: if He be the Son of God His every word is true, and they are disloyal cowards who will not face the hard things of Christ, but sneer at those who lead lives of irksome, ugly restraint by following in His footsteps whose mind and will were captivated to God. One cannot but ask why should those who have followed their own fancies rather than revelation be awarded eternal life?

Even souls enlightened by faith are too often extraordinarily sluggish about the one thing which really matters, they will fall from grace by sin, and though they know full well the remedy, they will remain for weeks and months and years, perhaps for ever alienated from the life of

God. Even souls that are in a state of grace frequently show the most lamentable slothfulness in using the means so liberally given us for increasing the treasure which is beyond all price. All this is due to the darkness and stubbornness left in us by original sin, Adam's legacy to his hapless offspring.

Nothing can act in any order whatsoever without at every moment receiving the immediate influx of the Prime Mover, the First Cause of every action, and there is a healing property in the purely natural action of God upon the human faculties which, to some extent, counteracts the native corruption that is in us, and enables a man to perform many good deeds in the natural order, so that the traveller in heathen lands is often surprised to find an esteem for chastity and much kindliness in a people whose religion is remarkable for nothing so much as its obsceneness and cruelty. Indeed, so closely will nature imitate grace that as

has often been observed, it is impossible for anyone but Him to whom all hearts are laid bare to know of which a specific good action is the outcome. A stark atheist who cannot be in a state of grace, will often exhibit much kindliness, forbearance, disinterestedness and so forth. While we are puzzled to see beside him a practical Christian who frequently gives way to petty spitefulness, who is testy and peevish over trifles, and who does not readily give up his own way for the sake of others. Yet this not very pleasing individual is, perhaps, all the while in a state of grace, whereas the former, however agreeable a man he may seem, lacks the first imperative condition for the reception of grace. Nature has made better progress in some ways with him towards the healing of his human corruption, than grace has succeeded in doing for the other. Though it may even be that both started with more or less the same natural defects, yet the unbeliever,

devoid of grace, has achieved greater self-control than the christian with all its aids. Still, the christian has a good chance of winning heaven, while the atheist, as long as he remains such, has none at all.

It is, however, certain that grace properly made use of will gradually heal the most faulty dispositions in our nature, and we often see in the lives of the saints that they became most eminent in virtue precisely on those points where they had most to contend with. Even if one watches the development of character in ordinary everyday christian lives, one perceives that slowly but surely grace will tone down the asperities, and stiffen the fibre where it is needed. But then, of course, grace must be corresponded with, effort must be made, the means allotted to us must be used, for whosoever is careless about his imperfections will not make much headway against them. The man who makes use of God's natural succours, even though he does not recognise their

author, will make a better outward show than the man who but feebly corresponds with God's supernatural aids.

However, we must not be discouraged at the slowness of our progress, there is no need for discouragement so long as we are trying: for holiness is a growth, and, like all growth, it is slow, silent and imperceptible. Sometimes it is true that God exhibits His power by performing in a moment the work of years, but that is not His usual way ; as a rule, just as you cannot see the grass grow, so neither can you mark a man's steps in holiness.

That we may know what to aim at in the pursuit of holiness, God has given us as examples Jesus and Mary, the perfect Man and the perfect Woman. At once an oft-felt objection arises, faith and conduct are requisite to Christian holiness, but Jesus walked by sight, we by faith. Where is the comparison ? To a soul in darkness, tormented with doubts why put forward as an example One Who at all

times gazed upon the face of the Eternal Truth ? Again in Jesus and Mary there was no original corruption : sinful man will query, what help can their example be to a savage heart like mine ? They who had no inordinate craving after the things of sense and time, how can they be an example to me whom temptation from within assails perpetually with a pitiless unappeasable pain ?

True ! at first sight the corruption left in us by original sin appears somewhat to detract from the force of the examples of Jesus and Mary, in whom sin had no part.

As regards faith, we may at least point to Her of whom St. Elizabeth said, " Blessed are thou that hast believed " (Luke i., 45), and Mary's faith was put to a far greater test than ever ours can be. Though in Jesus sight took the place of faith, it must be remembered that the first mover in any motion must necessarily itself be motionless, and we must be

content to see through His eyes. Surely though, He requires of us faith in His teaching, He has not left His authority as Teacher without sufficient guarantees.

Then, as regards the internal temptations springing from our own native corruption, it is true that these were not in Jesus and Mary. Yet both were tempted from without, and, after all, what is temptation but pressure put upon the will by pain, it matters little whether that painful pressure comes from within or from without, the test put upon the will is the same. Looked at in this light, the temptations of Jesus and Mary were immeasurably greater than anything we are called to sustain from the corruption of our nature. And though one of the principal torments of our temptation is the consciousness of our own weakness and the fear that we shall give way, still the same help is promised to us if we will but accept it, which fortified Them against sin, namely God's grace ; in some way or

other God is opening to us issue that we may be able to bear it. (1 Cor. x., 13.) If we fall, it is because we have not sought as we should that strength which alone can keep us from sin. It is difficult to see this when we have fought desperately, yet have been vanquished, and we are inclined to ask, "what more could I have done?" But if indeed we have deliberately sinned, it is certain that we have been lacking somehow in our correspondence with grace, for as St. Thomas teaches (Sum. Theo. 3a lxii. 6,3) the least degree of habitual grace is able to resist the fiercest assault of concupiscence. And even if we speak of the temptation of a soul not in grace, that very temptation is its opportunity for ascending to a state of grace, for a temptation resisted because we would not offend God is one of the noblest acts of love for God conceivable, since it is preferring Him to created goods when we have the strongest inducement to prefer creatures

to Him. Consequently a temptation resisted for this motive would restore the most sinful soul to a state of grace, nor would God according to His promise be wanting in His assistance to that soul in its hour of need. The struggling soul must not, therefore, allow its faith in the efficacy of grace and the power of prayer to be shaken on account of failures after efforts that were protracted and agonizing. If it has sinned deliberately it is quite certain that though the man himself is unable to see where, nevertheless in something or other his correspondence with grace has been faulty, either he has not resisted beginnings, or he has not apprehended what grace required of him, or he has misdirected his efforts, somehow and somewhere he has been at fault. Nor is it any good to grow disheartened, God will not desert him, if he will but seek reconciliation and try again. I have purposely said "if he has sinned deliberately" for all theologians are agreed that there

comes a point when reason may be so disturbed by antecedent passion of one kind and another as temporarily to lose control ; so that one who has struggled as it seems to him with all his might and yet fallen, may still hope, though by no means presume upon the hope, that in the moment of failure he was not responsible before God. It may seem degrading that we should thus so completely lose control of ourselves, but we must remember that when the barrier was broken down by the loss of original justice the natural laws of heredity, the influences of environment, and so forth, were left to pursue their course unchecked: not to mention those more exceptional but by no means mythical cases of obsession and possession, the power which Satan has acquired over the human body in our fallen state. And thus some men are born with a nature so disordered, that occasionally they may be completely carried away by passion over which their will has little or no control. It is a

miserable and pitiable state of things, but it is better than deliberate sin.

It may be asked, why did not Christ's redemption restore to us original justice, and give each one individually once again a fair start ? Our part is to submit to, not to criticise Divine measures. Neither have we any reason for thinking that we should have been more faithful to original justice than was Adam ; and if we had fallen again we could not have expected another chance, whereas now in compensation for our inherent weakness, mercy is held out to us after every fall so long as life lasts ; it is a fair balance, or rather the advantage is on our side. Our service to God becomes enhanced and ennobled, our merit all the greater, and the grace of redemption all the more conspicuous by reason of the great difficulty we experience in adhering to God. Moreover Christ's example of patient suffering would have been pointless if there had been nothing to suffer.

In fine Christ's redemption is complete and it is copious. The fault is our own, if we do not profit by it. And though the chances held out to each are so widely different, He has assured us that God takes all these chances into account and that condemnation will be meted out in proportion to opportunities neglected or abused. We shall be judged according to what we have, not according to what we have not: and we may be sure that if we with our narrow judgments are able to make allowances, the judgments of God will be full of the most wonderful surprises in the way of mercy. We believe that Christ's redemption offers to everyone the opportunity of undoing the sad work of the Fall and attaining to everlasting life. Of course a great difficulty presents itself in the case of infants who die without baptism in circumstances wherein baptism could not possibly be obtained, it is indeed hard to see how they have been given any chance of reaching heaven even

through the instrumentality of others. This difficulty has, I think, never been adequately met. If one might believe in the reincarnation of souls until each has received a responsible chance the difficulty would vanish, but I fear that faith and our philosophy will not permit these pleasing fancies. Theologians concede to such souls an eternity of perfect natural happiness, and we must leave it at that. The baptized who die in infancy are granted the Beatific Vision without any merit of their own, and since the unbaptized have done nothing towards winning perfect natural happiness, we must conclude that the merits of Christ's redemption are extended also to them, though in a lower degree.

CHAPTER V

Acceptance of Redemption

"Lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art called."—1. Tim. vi., 12.

It is a great though quite a common mistake to think that we can go easily and pleasantly through life without any serious care for the hereafter, and that somehow or other when the end comes we shall find ourselves securely translated to heaven. Such is not the case, heaven is a great prize and it is hardly won, to attain it we must use constant and often tremendous effort, it is only to be taken by violence. I have indicated in the foregoing chapters why it is that eternal life must cost us so dear. The reason is simply our original sin and the disorder in our nature resulting from it. Undoubtedly this is the darkest mystery we

have to face in the ways of Divine providence. Could we but understand it no doubt we should see the reason for the extraordinary inequality with regard to spiritual advantages which is manifest in human life. Nothing could be more patent than that to some are conceded immeasurably better chances of securing their salvation than to others. But if we bear in mind that all start life in original sin at enmity with God, we must perceive that not one has any claim of justice to urge on his own behalf. If to each is granted the opportunity of working out his salvation, the one who has received better opportunities should thank God for a signal mercy, but the one whose opportunities are not so good can lodge no protest, for he started life with no rights. Moreover experience teaches that a bad start in life is often retrieved and a good outset often thrown away. Could we but fully understand the dread mystery of original sin we should be in a fair

way of knowing why it is that persons get placed and circumstanced just as they seemingly ought not to be, why they are so ill-consorted with uncongenial characters, surroundings and occupations, why everything seems awry, out of place, ill-harmonized, why such abominations as white slavery and Putumayo atrocities are permitted: in fine we should come near to understanding man in his immeasurable pain. Yet though we cannot fathom this most terrible mystery, we perceive as Pascal says that it is the only postulate which meets the case of human misery, and that without it the drama of our life is wholly inexplicable. Men are strangely blind to the great realities of life, and fretfully impatient of any dogmas they have not formulated themselves. But this is no question of the wranglings of priesthoods and schools, which those incompetent to understand affect to look upon with disdain. It is an integral part of the christian revelation,

in fact the entire scheme of christianity is based upon it, and once denied the whole fabric of christianity falls to the ground. Piping metaphysicians still drone the old, everlasting questions, whence ? what ? whither ? Christ has answered once for all in masculine accents, whence ? from nothing ; what ? a human personality created by God in His own image and likeness, defaced through man's own sin ; whither ? to heaven or to hell. Stern, uncompromising, awful Teacher Who alone has fearlessly handled the dread realities of human life, Who knowing human nature in all its repulsive nakedness has yet found it so lovable that He must needs assume created manhood, for mankind's sake to live and die a Man. Vainly do we cry out, as I have heard some do in the anguish of temptation and the humiliation of failure, why hast Thou made me thus ? It is not God's doing, it is our own original sin which has broken out in this particular form of

temptation. Yet grace can triumph over every obstacle if we will but correspond. King David achieved a most exalted degree of sanctity, he was the man after God's own heart, his psalms proclaim that he had soared to the heights of contemplative prayer : yet who can study that character without perceiving that it was a case where grace had triumphed in a great soul over a nature robust and vigorous indeed, but almost savage in its brutal instincts ?

If, then, we would profit by Christ's redemption, escape hell and gain heaven, we must be careful above all things to correspond with the graces which are continually being held out to us, and this cannot be done without constant fighting against the darkness and stubbornness of our native corruption. First, with regard to the grace of faith, which is of supremest importance, being the basis of all supernatural sanctity, without which we can never be truly holy. Our Lord says, " He

that doth not believe is already judged" (John iii., 18) as though the unbeliever were at once ruled out of the running for the attainment of everlasting life. Of course, this is to be understood of those who have wilfully resisted the light of faith, which is offered to all in an implicit or explicit manner: of this we may be sure, for since grace sufficient to secure salvation is offered to all, and since salvation cannot be attained without faith, it is scarcely necessary to point out that at least implicit faith must be within the reach of all men. Who is there with the smallest experience in dealing with souls that has not frequently witnessed the sad spectacle of a soul which deliberately, and of set purpose, turns away from the light? There are the people who are afraid to inquire, the people who cannot be bothered with religion, the people who do not want to be convinced. Are not such as these rejecting the great offer of Jesus Christ, "If you continue in

My word you shall be My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John viii., 31)? Do their dispositions in any way correspond with the dispositions of those Corinthians concerning whom Our Lord said to St Paul: "I have much people in this city." (Acts xviii., 9)? Can they be thought to have part or lot with those of whom it is written: "And the Lord increased daily together such as should be saved" (Acts ii., 47)? The Heavenly Sower scatters the seed broadcast, but it is fruitful or unfruitful, according to the dispositions of the heart on which it falls. God alone can judge of the opportunities received, and the use that has been made of them, but because a man does not see the truth of catholic christianity, nor realize the obligation he is under of embracing the true faith and entering into the Church of Christ, it by no means follows that he is guiltless, for it may very well be that he fails to see the light because

he has not used his endeavours to overcome the inborn darkness and corruption which hinder him from perceiving the truth. The thoughts and dispositions of the heart are already there within, it is the touchstone of trial which reveals them and brings them to light. I am convinced that the difficulties which hold persons back from the Catholic Faith are moral rather than intellectual, or if intellectual, are rooted in some moral obliquity. The evidences are clear enough if properly looked into, but there is something which withholds the person from rendering assent, something he cannot give up : this obstruction to the mental vision is not necessarily material and sordid, quite often it appears to the person as something spiritual and noble, but his will is attached to it, and he cannot give it up. We like to be an intellectual and moral law to ourselves, and Christ's law is a yoke upon the intellect and the will, but unless we submit to it we cannot be

partakers in Him. The Church is Christ's mystical body, in that body He stands at the door and knocks; those who refuse Him admittance, who will not become incorporated into His body, will be in turn rejected by Him at the last day, or rather they have excluded themselves from participating in His glory by excluding themselves from sharing in His reproach.

Happy he to whom the Faith is given at baptism in early infancy amidst catholic surroundings, he has received the best possible start, and is spared the first battle in the great conflict. Hereinafter doubts may arise, but if he lapses it will be through his own fault. Yet this is but the beginning of holiness, and the long struggle against the corruption still left in his nature lies before him: as long as life lasts, so long will this warfare last within him. Everyone leads two lives, an outer life and an inner life, the outer life ranges from mere conventionalities to intimate

communion with some or other of our fellow creatures; the inner life is secret, but it contains a man's real history, often it is a life of sternest wrestlings and terrible sufferings, but it is only now and again that the turmoil beneath rises to the surface, and we realize almost aghast the intrinsic greatness of human nature, its majestic heights and its appalling depths. Running through the whole of the intricate drama is Adam's curse, of what splendid heroism it has been the occasion, of what revolting depravities it has been the cause. What infinite surprises the day of judgment will lay bare, the glorious sanctity that has lain hid under commonplace externals, the hateful wickedness which has existed under the cloak of respectability. We cannot get rid of our original corruption, and if we do not fight against it, disordered nature will plunge us into the most frightful excesses : greed of wealth leading to inhuman cruelty, love of power hardening the heart and searing

the conscience, sexual passion wandering away into all sorts of unaccountable vagaries, divers low cravings rendering brutish the nature which was made a little lower than the angels, offensive and ridiculous pride odious to both God and man : to any or all of these we may be driven if we do not take care, for the seeds are already within us. We may wonder that after Christ's redemption, it is not more easy to be good, that despite all our prayers and the frequentation of the sacraments we yet often fail ; doubt and despondency will sometimes creep over us, and we ask, where is the efficacy of grace ? Where is the promised succour ? We should remember that original corruption is still in us, and that no one is crowned except he strive lawfully (II Tim. ii., 5), the power of evil will not be utterly destroyed till the last day. Therefore we must fight. It is folly to talk about the sinful palpitating many and the peaceful few, those who try to serve God do so at the

cost of cruel pain, and if at last they attain to a measure of peace it is after long strivings, earnest prayers and, it may be, many falls. Some seem to think that the cloister is an enclosed garden where happy childlike souls, knowing nothing of the world and its evil, pass away quiet dreamy lives of little usefulness : whereas, in fact, the cloister is the battle-ground where the fiercest spiritual warfare is waged. It is probable that a solitary knows more of human nature than anyone else, for, like an angel, he sees in himself its grand and its horrible potentialities. Generally, however, those who speak of the ascetic life in this kind of way, know little of the world, and nothing of the cloister, and their vague poetic dreamings are very far from the stern realities of life. This world, with all its exquisite loveliness, is a sad world to live in, the contrast between the beauty of our surroundings and the foulness of human nature has been made the starting point for many fantastic

speculations: it can, however, only be explained by the christian teaching that we were meant to be happy, but we fell and brought upon ourselves all the misery which defaces this planet in itself so radiantly fair. It makes life hard to be surrounded with desirable things and to be warned off by prohibitions at every turn, because we are too corrupt to enjoy without excess: while to the superficial observer it looks as though the christian ascetic were waging an ugly and repulsive warfare with nature in her loveliness. To many christianity, with its restraints and prohibitions, seems hard, narrow and forbidding, hedged round with dogmas which cramp the intellect and moral laws which fetter the will. It makes little account of all that we prize in this world, and is forever reminding us that here we have no continuing city; its watchwords are the four last things, death, judgment, heaven and hell. Undoubtedly, it is hard to be indifferent to present pleasure and

present pain, when we live in the present. But we must not forget that human nature is not as it should be, and can only be restored by wholesome discipline; while experience shows at the end of life that the disciplined soul has achieved beauty, and the undisciplined soul has run riot in hideous deformities. In the light of eternity we shall see the full grandeur of self-denial and the value of earthly pain. Original sin has made our life dark and unlovely, has spoiled for us all the pleasant things, and given to them a bitter taste, for either we must restrain ourselves in their enjoyment, which is exceedingly irksome, or enjoy them unrestrainedly, and then the fear of death and judgment is over us, a fear which talk as loudly as he will, no man can put away.

Dislike of restraint must obviously be the note of a nature inherently rebellious, but restraint is the only way by which that nature can regain its original grandeur and beauty; and the love of the

Uncreated Beauty should inspire us to the arduous task of conforming ourselves anew to that image and likeness from which we are fallen: it is worth while to give up freedom for love, if for nothing less than love. Our prayer should ever be, "Lord! increase Thy glory in me," for left to ourselves we are deformity and ugliness, but beautiful and glorious when God manifests Himself in us. Many a time we desire and earnestly pray for something which God knows would not make for our sanctification, but if He refuses our petition it is because He has something better to give. As we look back through our past life we see everywhere the tokens of God's love towards us, so that even our sins forgiven should teach us to know God's unfailing goodness, and save us from despair should we alas! fall again.

Christ has taught us that the Cross is the true philosophy of life; suffer and strive we must if ever we are to win

heaven. The indifferent, if they think on the matter at all, appear to imagine that Heaven can be gained without effort. They are woefully deceived, their very indifference is a heinous outrage against the majesty of God, for it is as good as telling Him that the possession of His unveiled face for eternity is a guerdon not worthy of serious endeavour. In fact a life of indifference is a perpetual blasphemy : nor can the crown be won except through the Cross. If Our Lord's prayer in the Garden could not turn aside the Eternal Father from the decree of the Passion, we must not be surprised that He is deaf to our entreaties to be delivered from our pain. Better desist from asking the impossible and rather pray that we may learn how to unite our own passion with Christ's. His whole life was one of suffering and self-denial, even though the final Passion was short and sharp ; if then it seems to us that our agony is long drawn out and life very wearisome, it is because

according to the counsel of God a certain measure of suffering is necessary for our sanctification, but we could not bear it all at once without breaking under it. Besides life is in reality extremely short, it only seems long to us ; duration is a very relative thing, we are told that the series of actions in a dream apparently covering a long tract of time, is in truth all transacted in a few seconds : so in the light of eternity the pains and pleasures of our earthly life will be like the passage of a dream. So sad is life that the only thing which makes it tolerable is the reflection that it is passing away. We must set our faces to the conflict like men, for pain loses half its sting if you face it bravely. Moreover, "*vincenti dabo*," the palm to him who conquers. Few on earth know what a potent weapon suffering is in their hands, and how much it can obtain from God not only for themselves but also for others. If we would get to heaven we must leave our corrupt in-

clinations behind us, however painful may be the process of divesting ourselves of them. But it is the only way, "he that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world, keepeth it unto life eternal." "Where I am, there also shall my minister be." (St. John xii., 25–6.) We must reach the plain of immovable and untarnished holiness whereon Christ stands by striving in this world to imitate His pattern of self-abnegation; the imperfect beginning achieved here will be perfected hereafter. On the further shore we shall look back with unspeakable satisfaction upon the bloody passages of many a hard-fought field.

There is, then, consolation for poor, distracted humanity groping its way through time, striving with infinite pains and bitter humiliations to break through the bonds of its native corruption. It daunts the spirit to reflect that creatures so feeble as ourselves should be put to

such terrible proof. Weighted as we are with this heavy burden, it is no wonder that sometimes we break down; God knows this and is merciful. But the fact remains that original sin has tarnished all the joy of this world, and what was intended to be the abode of happiness has become a place of penance: mortification and self-denial are necessary conditions in the rehabilitation of fallen nature: and an eternity of the fruition of God is a guerdon so great that we could not expect it to be lightly won. In the old pagan world with its refined wickedness and its brutal coarseness gilded over though it were by all the splendid achievements of human genius, with its gorgeous palaces, its sumptuous feasts, its purple and fine linen, we see degraded man treading with ghastly and satanic pomp the way of death. In comparison with this the spectacle of our christian civilization is like light against darkness. And yet with all the thwarts and checks which

human perverseness puts in the way of Christ's conquest, what untold misery is still left to sadden the heart. Yea! within ourselves we experience constantly the evil workings of that first fatal sin, and we realize that heaven can only be carried at the sword's point, and on earth there can be neither respite nor repose. It is hard indeed to despise earthly happiness whilst we live upon earth. Yet the Cross is the only instrument whereby we can be moulded to the image of the Crucified, the only remedy for a corrupted nature, the only road to heaven: we must learn therefore to love it for the sake of Him who died thereon. Just as the rebel angels would not adore the Lord of Glory in a nature lower than their own, so rebellious man is loth to receive Him under the deformity of the Cross. But we must recognise His glory under that supreme humiliation and bow our stubborn necks to bear the Cross with Him: faith in the Cross and sub-

jection to the Cross must both concur in the soul that would attain to heaven.

The Jews celebrated the Sabbath of God the Father when He rested from the work of creation : we Christians celebrate the Sabbath of God the Son when redemption was completed : but there will be upon earth no Sabbath of the Holy Ghost, for that is eternal in heaven when the work of sanctification will be finished, and the war-worn Christian combatant shall hear it said : "Well done!"

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